

## MULTICULTURALISM AS A FOUCAULDIAN TECHNOLOGY OF POWER

*Contracting a Muslim religious identity online in Finland and the Quebec province (Canada)***Abstract**

The article proposes to compare perceptions and experiences of Muslims in Finland and in the Quebec province of Canada. Multiculturalism is conceived here as a Foucauldian technology of power. Analyzing two Muslim discussion forums, we argue that these digital versions of Foucault's technologies of the self can reflect and challenge politics of multiculturalism and the notion of integration. Even though the data do not allow generalizations, the discussion forums reveal strategies that guide Muslims towards a 'better and correctly practiced Islam', helping them to strip everyday life of what they consider to disturbing their religious obligations.

**Keywords**

Digital technologies • technologies of power • Finland • Muslims • Quebec

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**1 Introduction**

The presence of Islam and Muslims on the internet is dynamic and plentiful today. Its importance for Muslim migrant populations also appears to be vital, as it provides them with, for example, an excellent opportunity to find and spread information, to respond to and interact with others and to remain connected with their religious networks and religious leaders in distant lands (Mishra & Seeman 2010). The internet can also serve to create a virtual site of negotiation of the 'correct' religious practices or to build 'new' 'solid' identities (Bauman 2004), as can be seen in the case of immigrants and religious converts in various minority contexts. This article examines how the construction of a Muslim religious identity through digital technologies reflects and challenges two technologies of power (Foucault 1988a), the notions of integration and of multiculturalism in Finland and in the Quebec province of Canada.

Our main argument is based on the hypothesis that the ways in which the concepts of multiculturalism and of integration are conceptualized 'locally' have an impact on Muslim identity construction. In fact they can be seen as a means of governing individuals "as a society, as a part of a social entity, as a part of nation or a state"

(Foucault 1988b: 146). Our interest lies especially in the contact point between many and varied technologies of the domination of others and the self, which Foucault calls "governmentality" (Foucault 1988a: 19). For Foucault government implies "the conduct of a conduct", that is to say, a form of activity which shapes, guides or affects the conduct of people (Gordon 1991: 2). This relates the conduct of a conduct to the ways in which individuals experience, understand, judge and conduct themselves (Rose 1996: 135).

This leads us to another important concept for this study, which in a way can serve as a counterpoint: technologies of the self (Foucault 1988a). According to Foucault, technologies of the self "permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and the way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (Foucault 1988a: 18). These technologies not only are used but also practiced within the (actual or imagined) authority of a system of truth represented by particular technical practices, such as group discussions, diary writings and confessions (Rose 1996: 132, 135).

Though Foucault looked at technologies of the self used in Ancient Greece, the concept appears to be fruitful to talk about

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today's digital world, where the use of blogs, podcasts, and more recently socio-digital media such as Facebook and Twitter has allowed individuals to write and talk about themselves and others virtually everywhere through easily accessible technologies. In this paper, we concentrate on the use of the Internet and particularly discussion forums as a special form of technologies of the self. We argue that they can be used for self-reflection and negotiating conducts, behaviors, and opinions (technologies of the domination of others).

Two active Muslim discussion forums from Finland and Quebec will serve as case studies. We do not claim to represent Muslim communities as a whole, be it in Finland, Quebec, or elsewhere: there are too many answers to the questions "what is a Muslim?" (cf. Bilgrami 1992), and "who is to define this category" (Carlson 2003) to allow us to do that. As researchers, we need to refrain from limiting the freedom of others to 'choose' their identity, even if the exercise is difficult as we base our own study on the labels Muslim and Muslim immigrants. That is why our understanding of "Muslims" is based on the self-identification of people.

## 2 Comparing Muslim religious identity in Finland and Quebec?

At first sight, a comparison between Finland, a full member of the European Union, and Quebec, a province of Canada, will astonish the reader. A closer look at previous research shows that many societal aspects have been the basis of comparison between Finland and Canada: bilingualism (McRae 1978), social participation of Vietnamese refugees (Valtonen 1999), art education (Ketovuori 2007), and skilled worker immigrants (Kovanen & Noki 2008). Yet researchers have rarely suggested comparing Finland and the Canadian province of Quebec (see the exception of Pelletier 2007 for education). A priori, comparing religious minorities and multicultural politics in these two contexts seems risky as Lutheran Protestant majority Finland, a sovereign nation state since 1917, is often characterised by 'cultural homogeneity' and emigration whereas the history of Catholic majority Quebec is bound with immigration.<sup>1</sup> The population of Quebec is approximately the same as that in Finland (approximately 8 million vs. 6 million); Quebec received about 49,500 immigrants in 2010, which is almost the double amount compared with the Nordic country (26,700 immigrants, which was 2,400 less than the year before).<sup>2</sup> However, both of the study contexts are often characterized as highly secularized societies. In addition, Quebec's historical and political 'national consciousness' built up by stateless nation-building (Keating 1997) compares with Sovereign Nation States in Europe. As such, Quebec elaborates its own diversity policy almost autonomously, that is, partially immigration policies (excluding e.g. refugee status determination) and fully multicultural policies called interculturalism. The fact that immigration and diversity policies are relatively new

phenomena in Finland makes the comparison to Quebec, whose history is bounded with immigration, very interesting.

One central point in common is related to Muslim immigration: Islam is a relatively new religion in both contexts even though the first Muslims arrived in Finland and in Quebec a long time ago and both at the same period: Mishar Tatars arrived in Finland and Syrians in Quebec at the end of the 19th century (Labelle, Rocher & Antonius 2009: 14; Martikainen 2008: 68). The arrival of more significant immigration flows including an important number of Muslims started in Finland and experienced a considerable increase in Quebec during the 1990s<sup>3</sup> as the number of Muslims doubled during that decade in the province. Ten years later (Census of 2001), there were about 110,000 Muslims in Quebec.<sup>4</sup> In Finland the estimated number of Muslims in 2010 was only about 42,000.<sup>5</sup> However, in both contexts, the Muslim population is characterized by a high diversity of origins (Labelle, Rocher & Antonius 2009: 16; Martikainen 2008: 78). On the other hand, Islam cannot be considered only as 'immigrants' religion' anymore, as more and more converts choose Islam as their worldview. In Finland for example there are about 1000 Muslim converts (Martikainen 2008) and in Quebec about 4000–5000 francophone Muslim converts (Mossière 2010).

## 3 Integration as a contribution to technologies of power

In his 1988 seminar at Berkeley, Michel Foucault reminded us that throughout his career he had attempted to analyze various sciences "as very specific 'truth games' related to specific techniques that human beings use to understand themselves". He labeled these techniques or four technologies as: (1) Technologies of production; (2) Technologies of sign systems; (3) Technologies of power; and (4) Technologies of the self (Foucault 1998a). In this study we retain two of these technologies in order to look at the construction of Muslim religious identities: *technologies of power* and *technologies of the self*. We shall problematize the latter later on in the article. As to technologies of power, they are defined by the philosopher as determining "the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject" (Foucault 1988a). We argue that (local) politics of multiculturalism, and the derived notion of adaptation, are very much reminiscent of such technologies as they impose on societies a specific way of conceptualizing/objectivizing the self and the other.

Integration has been a key concept of multicultural politics in both our study contexts since the 1990s (Saukkonen & Pyykkönen 2008; Potvin, Eid & Venel 2007: 21). Even though it is often presented "in terms of phases that must culminate with successful incorporation into the host culture" (Bhatia & Ram 2009: 140), different pressures to 'integrate' can apply to different categories of individuals. In order to 'assess', for example, immigrants' integration, what is now criticized as universal, linear models and theories

have been developed and used in both politics and research. The idea that integration can be analyzed in terms of success or failure in “learning to read the culture’s basic text and making it one’s own” (Fay 1996: 60) is presented increasingly as being flawed as the concept of culture, often an empty signifier, is problematic (cf. Phillips 2010, Dervin 2011). The overemphasis on culture overlooks the fact that integration is also a psychological concept which is heavily linked not only to ideology and political beliefs but also to the *doxa* (‘the common sense’) conveyed, among others, by the media (Bhatia 2007). This is important as it pinpoints a major potential difference between macro-politics (governmental/state levels) and micro-politics of multiculturalism. In this study we examine how these two interrelate in digital technologies.

For Jan Nederveen Pieterse (2010: 87), in our global multicultural worlds, integration and ‘acculturation’ have become extremely flexible: “in the past immigrants had to ‘choose’ between two overall monocultural settings, now they navigate between two or more multicultural environments”. We agree with these criticisms and wish to emphasize the fact that (local) politics of multiculturalism can largely influence the expression and construction of immigrants’ religious identity.

#### 4 (Local) politics of multiculturalism

In order to better understand the argument that multicultural politics can serve as a means of ‘governing the others’ or of allowing ‘others to govern themselves’ in both Finland and Quebec, Fleras & Elliott’s (2002: 14–15) four-level analytical distinction can be used. They argue that multiculturalism can be defined in (1) a *descriptive way* (the existence of ethnically diverse groups who are culturally different and who wish to remain so – at least in principle); (2) a *prescriptive way* (a set of ideals that promote diversity as normal, necessary, and acceptable); (3) a *political way* (a framework for justifying government initiatives in diversity issues); and (4) a *practical way* (to be used by minority groups to advance their interests, compete for scarce resources, or upbraid society for failing to abide by multicultural principles). Multiculturalism can also be examined from a paradigmatic angle, as an *ideal* or as an ideology that has the capacity to influence behaviors, evaluate actions, and legitimize activities (Fleras & Elliott 2002: 35). A good example of the latter is Aje Carlborn’s study of multiculturalism in Sweden as a hegemonic ideology (2003: 23). He argues that such a political system of thought is used to both guide the actions and the reflections of intellectuals in different institutional contexts in relation to ‘the other’ and to define cultural differences in a particular way and cultural diversity in a general way. In this study, we are adopting a *paradigmatic approach* to multiculturalism in the presentation of (local) politics in the contexts under scrutiny.

In Finland, in spite of the State’s positive attitude towards cultural pluralism, multiculturalism has, most of the time, been analyzed as a pure descriptive and democratic fact (see Sakaranaho 2006: 53). Compared with other European and Nordic countries, the fact that there has been few immigrants in Finland has triggered a popular understanding and representation of Finland as a ‘homogeneous nation’ (Saukkonen & Pyykkönen 2008) and thus multiculturalism as “an element that comes from outside of Finnish society” (Clarke 1999: 36). This is reflected also in Finland’s multicultural policies which, after the early 2000s, have concentrated mainly on instrumental principles that combine the integration of individuals into society with collective rights of communities to maintain their own culture (see Saukkonen and Pyykkönen 2008, Act on the integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers 493/1999 section 2). The question of the domination of collective rights versus individual rights could find its origins in the misleading representations of the notion of ‘culture’, which can serve for sacrificing the rights and interests of individuals to the preference of a cultural group (Phillips 2007: 72). As such, multicultural policies based on collective rights can produce discourses of ethnic and religious communities as stable by nature, and lead to stereotypization of these communities and exclusion of global, hybrid and ‘in-between’ identities (see Khan 2002: 125–127).

Unlike Finland, Canadian multiculturalism is usually approached through Fleras and Elliott’s third and fourth levels of analysis (multiculturalism determined in political and practical ways). Multiculturalism has been institutionalized in the Federation since 1971 and implanted in the legislation by the 1988 law of multiculturalism (Labelle, Rocher & Antonius 2009). Multicultural ethos and cultural diversity, cross-cultural understanding and harmonious cultural coexistence have been central components of the Canadian political culture and public philosophies which have shaped public discourses, policies and programs during the recent decades (Garcea 2006). In Quebec, the relation between unity and particularities is ‘governed’ under the double influence of two legal traditions, the French *laïcité* and the Canadian *common law* from which Quebec’s interculturalism has emerged as the multicultural philosophy and politics (Lefebvre 2010: 93). However, interculturalism as an integration policy has never been fully, officially defined by the Quebec government, although its underlying principles were formulated some time ago (Bouchard & Taylor 2008). It is often linked to the idea that Quebec represents a nation of French cultural minority (*versus* the Canadian Anglophone majority) to whom integration can represent a condition for its development or even survival. This can be seen as reflecting a descriptive way of defining multiculturalism. It is defined as contrary to Canadian cultural relativism that does not impose any official culture (Potvin, Eid & Venel 2007: 20–22).

## 5 Digital technologies of the self: constructing a Muslim migrant identity

In this section, we argue that another of Foucault's technologies, i.e. technologies of the self can help us to understand the construction of a Muslim migrant identity online (Dervin & Riikonen 2009, Abbas & Dervin 2009).

When Muslim immigrants arrive in a context where Islam is not the majority religion, they might question the 'right way' of practicing their religion. In this era of glocal (global/local) interconnections facilitated by digital technologies (satellites, media, internet, smartphones, etc.), the religious context of immigrants can be influenced by transnational and translocal contexts which can be contradictory in many ways. For example, as we have stated, Muslim immigrants may continue to follow their religious leaders from distant lands, though these leaders might not have enough knowledge about the immigrant's everyday context - thus making it difficult for them to adapt to it. In pluralized social and institutional contexts, traditional scholars can be also challenged and a normative discourse about how to 'do' religion can be thus heterogenized. Religious interpretations and concepts are discussed, for example, *online* and new forms of religious authorities can appear, such as "auto-designated" Imams (due to a lack of official Imams in immigration contexts) who are accepted locally and individually, but may not be in a larger Muslim context (Sakaranaho 2006: 266). In this context, internet forums can form a site of negotiation of the 'right and wrong' religious practices among Muslims with or without authoritative 'official' voices. Technologies of power such as multicultural politics can also participate in these acts of negotiation and guide and/or impose certain images of what it means to be a part of a minority group (Muslim or/and immigrant) online.

## 6 Forging Muslim immigrants' self/selves: a look at two online forums

The following analysis is based on two websites, which serve as discussion forums. We are interested in observing how the forum participants construct their (immigrant) religious identities and at the same time, how much of the technologies of power represented by both multiculturalism and adaptation are included in these expressions, constructions, and negotiations of the self.

Three different topics related to shaping Muslim self/selves and technologies of power are examined: (1) Guidelines on the difficulties a Muslim migrant would face in the two non-Muslim societies; (2) The proper way of living an Islamic life in non-Muslim societies; and (3) Relationships with other Muslims.

A few words about the websites:

*lamImmigrant.com* is a discussion forum based website created in 2008 and aimed at Muslim immigrants arriving and settling in Canada. The website is maintained by RubyDo, a veiled Muslim

woman as is seen in her profile picture. She defines the objective of the website as "to share some tips, thoughts and sometimes some fun to make it easy for immigrants to start their lives in Canada". Despite the use of the English language (and sometimes Arabic) most of the posted information concerns mainly Muslim life in French-speaking Montreal in Quebec. In March 2011 there were approximately 70 posts (posted mainly between 2008 and 2009) – which is not a great amount when compared with the hundreds or even thousands of posts published in various international Muslim discussion forums. The main reason why this website has caught our attention is the fact that it is addressed especially to Muslim immigrants coming to/in Canada and it contains practical information about starting a new life in the new 'host society'.

*Tulevaisuus.org* (translated as Future.org)<sup>6</sup> is a Finnish language based Muslim website, which includes a variety of information about Islam and Muslim life: "Islamin perusteet" (Basics of Islam), "Ajankohtaista" (News), "Uusille muslimille" (For new Muslims), "Videot ja luennot" (Videos and lectures), "Koraani" (Qur'an), "Mediakirjasto" (Media library). The webmaster(s) are/is not explicitly mentioned but forum administrators can be traced in some posts, as in "Islam Suomessa" (Islam in Finland) the forum administrator is called 'Mikael'. The discussion forum is divided into "Islam foorumi" (Islam forum) and "Muut aiheet" (Other subjects). The forum of interest here is "Islam in Finland". It is included in the Islam forum and contains 216 discussion topics and 2236 messages (April 2011). It should be noted that we could not find a Finnish Muslim webpage addressed only to Muslim immigrants in Finnish or in English.

Following this short introduction to the forums it is easy to see how different they are. While *lamImmigrant* is clearly devoted to Muslim immigrants and has a more international profile, *Tulevaisuus* opens discussions to any Muslim, be she/he an immigrant or not, mainly through the Finnish language. As we are working with discussion forums, we face the issue of anonymity and thus the impossibility to say if the forumers are (1) Real immigrants and (2) Muslims or even located in one specific geographical location (Finland or Quebec). Aware of these problems, we believe that analyzing these two forums can still provide some interesting information on religious self construction, multiculturalism and views on integration, especially as our study is positioned within a constructionist approach to the self and identity and is not interested in being exhaustive.

## 7 Attitudes towards multiculturalism and integration – beyond technologies of power?

Our analysis of the data shows a rather positive attitude towards multiculturalism (Quebec) and a complete lack of discussion of it (Finland). The potential impact of technologies of power, local multicultural politics and the concept of integration, is limited when the

forumers talk about other immigrants and about their own position as representatives of a minority group.

In the **lamimmigrant** forum several categories are devoted explicitly to the theme of integration. In the post *Immigrant's everyday life in Montreal*, multiculturalism (as a demographic fact, the descriptive way to define it) is lauded: "one of the richness of Montreal is the multi-culture value". According to the author of the post, this adds to the migration experience and triggers harmony:

One of the richness of Montreal is the multi-culture value. It adds a lot to the city. All immigrants work on harmony to build the city. (...) I see this every day at work and it touched me deeply when I was working on a university group project; we were five with different backgrounds and cultures, China, Morocco, Romania, Quebec and Egypt. Each has his way of thinking and brilliant ideas. (...) I was impressed by the different view that each has in the same point and the great values we had by the end of the project.

We have a clear celebration of the positive effects of multiculturalism as a demographic fact here: "it adds a lot to the city", "it touched me deeply", "each has his way of thinking and brilliant ideas"... The way multiculturalism is conceived is also clearly dependent on the fuzzy concept of culture ("we were five with different backgrounds and cultures") and thus differentialism. Note that the mentioned context (higher education) reveals that the author of the post lives in a somewhat privileged context in Quebec.<sup>8</sup>

All in all the picture of other immigrants in the post appears to be optimistic and suggests the idea that they can be useful facilitators for integration. Another post proposes that when a Muslim immigrant feels lonely, trying to find immigrant friends might help them to feel good. She starts her post by warning the readers that "Knowing people is not hard but getting friends is VERY HARD". She then dichotomizes Quebecers and immigrants. Immigrants are "in general more interactive with you than Quebecois because they face the same what you face and will respond to you" while Quebecois (those who impose 'politics of power'), though they are described as "kind and nice", "there is always a barrier that will prevent you to interact with some of them. There is always a limit for the friendship. They are very kind, helpful and everything but it is not common to find Quebecois who accept you as a friend, invite you home and have a deep relation". As such, 'locality' (as represented by Quebecers) does not appear as facilitating integration (understood as having acquaintances and contacts here). She goes on asserting that "Having friends immigrants from a different culture and nationalities than yours is something veryyyyy positive. You will learn new stuff, different way of thinking, new fun ways. You will enjoy it really. It will add a depth to your personality". So the politics of multiculturalism described are 'micro-' and contain very little of official discourses – at least on the surface.

The **Tulevaisuus** forum differs from the other set of data as no explicit discussion on immigrant Muslims arriving in Finland or

multiculturalism was traced. One topic of discussion is aimed at Muslim immigrants: "Muslimi maahanmuuttajille tietoa/linkkejä" (Information/links for Muslim immigrants), but it remains with no contribution. This is why no clear conclusion can be drawn as to whether multiculturalism among the forumers is seen as a purely demographic fact, or how technologies of power are perceived. However, it is interesting to note though that the dichotomy between the 'host society' and immigrants appears from time to time. In what follows a Finnish Muslim refers to this issue in relation to one specific mosque:

Is it meant for some specific nationality or can some kind of basic Finn go there to smell the atmosphere? What language is used there? Or which of the mosques in the capital area are the most recommended for 'beginners'?<sup>9</sup>

As we can see, there seems to be some hesitation and prudence in the dichotomization of Finns and other Muslims (maybe even some feeling of inferiority?). Also the absence of discussions in English under the rubric of Islam in Finland can make English speaking immigrants invisible. For example, the administrator (Mikael) offers some discussion topics in English such as "Islam Chat # islam-finland" and "Islam and Muslims in Finland" which are addressed to "non-Finnish speaking visitors" in order to talk about Muslims and Islam in Finland. These suggested discussions are mostly located at the beginning of the forum and remain without answers. This could suggest some sort of differentialism between Finnish and Immigrant Muslims. One can thus also ask if the limited presence of English speaking Muslims in Finland (or Finnish Muslims who speak English) is an explanation, but also if the potentially low/limited technological knowledge/interest of some Muslim immigrants does not allow them to use internet forums in order to discuss religious matters or simply because they have no wish to do so.

The kind of barrier between Finnish and Immigrant Muslims can also be found from the immigrants' side as is indicated in one Moroccan Muslim's comment:

I am a Moroccan Muslim I live in Marrakesh I would like to be your friend so please forgive me i didnt speak finnish language for long time so excuse me if I write mixed language finnish and english im verry happy that i find muslims from finland. so I can now remember Finnish language and make Muslim friends please write to me.

This could also suggest a certain feeling of prudence (or inferiority?) when it comes to approaching Finnish Muslims. This time the feeling might be linked to the Finnish language, which in this post can be seen as a barrier between Finnish and immigrant Muslims.

The dichotomization and the kind of inferior feeling can also be felt between 'born in Muslim families' and converted or 'returner' Muslims. One author philosophizes with the idea:

When born in a Muslim family one grows up within the religion, sees its practice every day, learns from parents, brothers and sisters and from relatives... returned, like me, push hard and the feeling is this (smiley hits the head to the wall) it is just more difficult to use the hijab, learn the Qur'an alone, to be alone with the faith... I don't mean that born as a Muslim wouldn't have problems (...) but it is harder when born in a different social surrounding and faith, we returnees are like babies first... (...) and I feel like it is seen as more natural when a darker sister is a Muslim. This is based only on my experience; it is not an absolute truth, only what I feel...

What we can point out with these excerpts is that the dichotomization (here based mainly on skin color) of Finnish and immigrant Muslims can also lead to the differentialism 'within', and the hesitation (or even inferiority) can be felt by the Finnish Muslims towards the immigrant Muslims and *vice versa*.

In conclusion, we can point out that the different definitions of multiculturalism as politics of power in the two societies under scrutiny (Finland, Quebec) do not seem to participate directly in the self-expression and self-construction of the people who interact online, whether they are immigrants or not. However, it can contribute to creating an *ideal* about diversity (IamImmigrant) or dichotomizing not only immigrants and the 'locals' (IamImmigrant), but also immigrant and converted or 'returned' Muslims (Tulevaisuus). It is contained in a sense in the creation of a certain self-image of 'being an immigrant' in general (differentiation between immigrants *versus* the 'host society') and 'being a Muslim' in particular (immigrant Muslims *versus* 'returned' Muslims). Thus through the forums, the participants define themselves and others, for example, by creating the dichotomies 'us' *versus* 'them' or specific positions like 'in-between' (or 'neither-nor') (cf. some converted Muslims).

## 8 Living an 'authentic' Muslim daily life and politics of power

The canonical definition of integration in multicultural politics that we criticized earlier asserts that immigrants are automatically supposed to or led to both 'adopt' the 'new culture' and 'keep' their 'own culture' in order to better integrate in the 'host society' – as long as they are 'compatible'. In our view, this question becomes more central when we deal with religion and the possibility to practice it (or not) to achieve or maintain an 'authentic religious life'. For example, in Islam one category of behavior (cf. *infra*) distinguishes forbidden (haram) and permitted (halal) behaviors mostly in relation to foodstuff such as meat (Pratt 2005: 93).

To start with, in **Tulevaisuus** under some forums (like "rukoilu sosiaaliviraston tiloissa" (praying at the social office), "islamin uskonnon opetus" (teaching of Islam), "islamituntemus päiväkodeissa/

hoitoalan henkilökunnalla" (knowledge of Islam at the daycares/ social services staff), the question about maintaining Islamic practices in a minority context becomes a burning issue. For example, the forum entitled "praying at the social office" is dedicated to a description of a Muslim woman's negative experience related to her right to pray at work. During an IT training, she received some negative feedback when she asked where she can pray (excused later). In the end, she gives the following advice to other Muslims:

(...) I thought to give you a tip if you are in such a difficult situation (e.g. as a new Muslim) regarding praying, for example, at the workplace or other kind of misunderstandings/conflict situations, it is worth giving constructive feedback... You never know what kind of impact your feedback has. And even with a small gesture you can diminish the gap between the mainstream society and Muslims; it is always one step forward.

This example shows not only a clear dichotomization between Muslims and non-Muslims, but also the way the constant negotiation between the majority and minority positions is done. This is partly linked to the question of the 'legal limits of multiculturalism', that is, what people can and cannot do in the name of religion (or culture) (the forumer asks "I would like to hear the point of view of Finnish or Helsinki City's legislation (...)"). This question, targeted directly at technologies of power, can create confusion if the rights and limits are not clear or if the person of the minority group does not know about her/his legal rights. In this specific case the negotiation of the conflict situation occurred at a personal level (directly with the conflicting side as she planned "to contact directly by email this person", and talk with her own boss). The chain of posts shows clearly the development of the forumer's purpose: it moves from a description/reflection of one's own experience (and self-definition) to an advice about the 'right way' to behave in a conflicting or difficult situation and thus how they have managed to influence others and technologies of power.

These pieces of advice can be not only given but also asked for, as the topic of a forum "ihmisten jatkuva tuijottelu" (people's continuous staring) shows. In this forum, the forumer (a Finnish Muslim woman) wonders about what to do when people are continuously staring at her because she is a veiled Finnish Muslim. However, the negotiation between minority and majority positions is not only linked to 'negative encounters' between non-Muslims and Muslims, especially when they feel 'in-between' (instead of neither-nor as we saw *supra*). For example, one Finnish Muslim woman forumer describes her position as a negotiator in a forum of "islamituntemus päiväkodeissa/hoitoalan henkilökunnalla" (knowledge of Islam at the daycares/ social services staff):

At my work, I try myself to inform everyone by my own knowledge. People can also ask me things more easily, because I am a young Finnish convert who spreads the word, sisters! The example you show is also crucial.

Another aspect is the normative aspect of the 'authentic religious life' in a minority context. In **lamImmigrant** 16 categories (15 in English and one in Arabic) are proposed to support immigrants in this task. The given information does not only relate to the topic of religion ("halal food", "Muslim resources"), but it also proposes more general topics on immigrant life ("before landing", "credit cards and banks", "Positive thinking"). A lot of the questions and suggestions posted are related to what to do to live and continue experiencing an 'authentic' Muslim daily life in Canada. Multiculturalism as technologies of power is omnipresent in these discussions.

In the category *Before Landing*, a post lists 11 things to bring to Canada. It is interesting to see how religious elements are mixed with daily 'practical' elements – but also how the latter outnumber the religious (9 vs. 2). The religious effects include: "worship and prayer stuff" (an Al-fajr Islamic alarm clock which plays the call for prayer, prayer carpets) and "veils". On the other hand, bed stuff (pillow covers, blankets), *luffa* (a sponge), a detergent (Dettol)... are recommended.

In the category *Halal Food* on the same website posts entitled "Where to find Halal & Middle East Food?", "Are Muslims eating Halal in Canada?", "Halal cheese and yogurt", "Halal Restaurants" and "Pig-Pork names" are found. Some posts provide the reader with addresses in Quebec where they can obtain Halal food (supermarkets, restaurants...). All in all the posts in this category do not include any personal discussion about the 'right or wrong' ways of being Muslim but they act more like technologies which lead individuals to a 'right' Islamic way of living. Advice is also given on the care that one should take when buying food: "Make sure to read the ingredients before buying because companies change the components from time to time like Kraft cheese before they had the kosher symbol and now I do not notice it on their products". As to pork, the website provides a full description of pig cuts so that readers can check food description. The author concludes with the words of advice, which tell the reader that faith can be stronger than experiences or that it can help go through difficult ones: "After all, the most important thing in my opinion is that you say remember to say "besm Allah" (in the name of God) before you eat just in case you was mistaken in whatever you eat".

On the other hand, this is not enough for everyone. One episode recounted by the author – which is not contextualized – shows that it can be also difficult to 'trust' locality for religious purposes:

One day, I went to a store who has a big label on his window saying HALAL. I usually buy without making any investigations as long as it is written Halal. I don't know why that day I decided to ask "is this chicken cut by neck and you said bismAllah when you cut it?" He said "no, Halal means you just say bismAllah and eat"!!!!!! (...) Then I really became very picky when it comes to eating in Halal restaurants or buying from Halal stores.

In the Finnish data (**Tulevaisuus**) some posts also pay attention to Halal food. Muslims in Finland can also confront the same kind

of problems concerning the 'trust' of locality as in our Quebec example pointed out. One author asserted that when she asked about the 'righteousness' of Halal labeled product – was the meat really prepared the halal-way? – she got the answer that the enterprise owner is Muslim, nothing more.

Difficulties other than finding Halal meat are mentioned in the Finnish data. Under the category of *Kysymyksiä muslimielle* (Questions for Muslims) topics include many accurate questions in relation to living an authentic Muslim life: celebrating Christmas in Finnish schools; Mums, how do you get the peace for praying?; Has someone managed to ski with abaya and niqab?; Women's gym where one can be without using a hijab, etc.

All in all, the posts in both forums show the difficulties reported by Muslims when they want to live their religious life in a (new) 'non-Muslim majority society'. In the Finnish data it is clear that this problematic does not just concern immigrant Muslims but also converts. Throughout this section, unlike the previous one, technologies of power, officialized in law or informally put in scene by the forumers' interlocutors – be they Muslim or not – were identified.

## 9 Relationships with other Muslims (immigrants and reverts) – aids to dealing with technologies of power?

As the websites are dedicated to Muslims, it is normal that a lot of data deal with how to relate to other Muslims in the 'host country'.

On the Quebec website (**lamImmigrant**) several posts (yet a minority) deal directly with how to practice Islam in Canada and what is expected of Muslims. In one post, it is suggested that "Having friends Muslims is very important":

You are in Canada, you do not hear any call for prayer and at a moment you want somebody like you to push you up a higher level or Eman<sup>10</sup> or even to make u more solid on your religion level. Somebody like you to talk with, who understands your pains from eye contact like these solid friends you left in your country. (...) Having muslim friends from your culture is tricky a bit. Just do your best to look for people POSITIVE and PRACTICING ISLAM.

A list of associations and mailing lists is then provided to help readers find Muslim friends. Note that the author talks about Muslim friends not Muslim migrant friends.

In the following post, the author explains that one of the duties of Muslim immigrants is to do something for Islam in Canada, that is, support other Muslims:

One of the good thing a Muslim immigrant need to consider while living in Canada is to do something for Islam. Adding a value as a Muslim can have many ways, one of these ways is to support and help new Muslim reverts. (...) You can find them in islamic events, in the prayer rooms, masjeds, in eftar<sup>11</sup>

of Ramadan done my the universities, in conferences, in the streets. Take the initiation and do the step to know them and support them. (...)They ask you things, and not everything that you know so you go search and that's how you increase your knowledge in the religion, they encourage you to go deep and deep in Islam.

To the author, this relationship with other Muslims and especially converts can help immigrants become more Muslim, that is, reinforce their Muslim identity.

In **Tulevaisuus** and especially under the rubric "Islam in Finland" information about Islamic activities in Finland is provided, usually without distinguishing immigrant Muslims and Muslims in general. The forum proposes several discussions on mosques in Finland, Arabic language courses, etc. Sometimes the discussion revolves around Finnish Muslims and their presence in mosques. This is often linked to the question of language: Are there people who speak Finnish? "Almost in every mosque in Helsinki there are Finnish converts or those who speak excellent Finnish and can serve as translators".

What is interesting is that one discussion topic includes a survey about "Are you a lonely Muslim?". The administrator has specified in a separate post that loneliness here is linked to 'returned Muslims'. He even asks participants to say if they have found Muslim friends after their conversion. According to the survey (61 answers until April 2011), the majority has answered that they are not alone (26%), whereas 16% have answered yes, they have not found any close friends, and another 16% answered a little. Some of the comments left about the topic dealt with the 'moral' loneliness in a non-Muslim society, while other comments mention the difficulties to find other Muslims to share thoughts and words:

I know quite many Muslims with whom we meet sometimes but it doesn't fulfil the longing to get a real Muslim soul mate.

I don't feel myself as a lonely Muslim even though I don't have Muslim friends...it doesn't matter if the friend is Muslim if she/he is "correct".

In the end I start to feel that I am losing my will even to try to get new friends, cannot believe anymore in my possibilities... And I live in a city where a lot of Muslims live, in the city itself and in the near cities.

As these different answers show, the experiences of being a Muslim can vary depending on the perspective (personal/community). Also the need to interact (virtually or face-to-face) and the 'affirmation' for this identity vary a lot according to personal experiences. What is remarkable is that only one of the posts claims that the importance of a friend is not in his/her 'Muslim-ness' but his/her 'correctness'. This could demonstrate the need to strengthen the (new) Muslim identity through other Muslims. It could also indicate

the need to reinforce one's Muslim identity in the face of technologies of power/domination represented in the new context.

## 10 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the way Muslim religious identity was constructed through digital technologies in case studies from Finland and the Quebec province of Canada. Another objective was also to show how these constructions reflected and challenged our adaptation of Foucault's technologies of power/domination to designate the notions of integration and of multiculturalism. Even though no official discourses of multiculturalism were found, the notion was present explicitly or implicitly in the data. In *Immigrant*, multiculturalism was mentioned explicitly but it was done in mainly descriptive (the existence of ethnically and culturally diverse groups that wish to remain) and prescriptive ways (multiculturalism as an ideal) (Fleras & Elliott 2002). In *Tulevaisuus*, technologies of power were not explicitly discussed in the forums, but many dichotomizations between Muslims and non-Muslims, Finnish Muslims and other Muslims were found. It then appears that multiculturalism is used in a descriptive way in this forum, but also in a practical way, that is, to be used by minority groups to advance their interests, compete for scarce resources, or upbraid society for failing to abide by multicultural principles, as Muslims from the minority position discussed conflicting situations in the society. Even though we would not risk any generalizations on the impact of official multicultural politics on Muslim identity construction, the two different corpora have provided us with hints at the strategies used by Muslim migrants (and Muslims converts in the case of Finland) to craft and to negotiate Muslim selves (their own and others') in non-Muslim majority societies. These technologies are exceptional in the sense that they allow people to interact with others across spaces and times, and thus to multiply their possibilities to question their identities and to contribute to the construction of 'others'.

It seems that the analyzed web pages can trigger a consciousness of a 'certain authenticity of Muslim life' for Muslims, but also guide Muslims and Muslim immigrants to a better and 'correctly practiced' Islam and help them to strip everyday life of elements which are disturbing the essential religious obligations in the new host country (see also: Christiansen 2003, Jacobsen 2006, Nilan, Donaldson & Howson 2007). This is especially reflected in the "immigrant survival" topics presented on the websites. In both forums, it is very difficult to say whether those participating in the discussions are representatives of the Muslim migrant population or even Muslim population in general in Quebec and in Finland. The Finnish discussion forum opened other perspectives for us as the authors were mainly converted Finnish Muslims. First, it shows that technologies of power can concern not only immigrants, but also the 'locals'. As international mobility and migration make religious affiliations more mobile globally and produce new affiliations, the

question of integration can also impact on converted believers from the host society who might want to 'fit in' with the immigrant faith based communities in order to "strengthen their new identity" (as expressed in a forum). This gives us another totally different perspective on the notion of integration – a concept that we have proposed to criticize in reference to recent scientific discussions. The Finnish data has thus pointed at the fact that when working on immigration and religion (especially Islam) we need to beware of the fact that a certain religious identity does not automatically mean a migrant or a 'foreign' identity.

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## Notes

- 1 The Canadian constitutional plan from 1867 limits the privileged status of religion to education (Lefebvre 2010). No state religion or collaboration with religions are mentioned but can be found in some provincial documents (ibid.). Even if the preamble to the revised Constitution Act 1982 recognizes the supremacy of God, there is no jurisprudence or juridical impact with it (ibid.). Conversely the Finnish Constitution (1999) recognizes the privileged status of Lutheran churches as it

states that provisions on the organization and administration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church are laid down in the Church Act (ibid.). As such, the Evangelical Lutheran Church has an independent position towards the state in terms of public administration. Yet it cooperates with the state on many and varied matters.

- 2 Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles (Québec) (2010) [http://www.micc.gouv.qc.ca/publications/fr/recherches-statistiques/FICHE\\_syn\\_an2010.pdf](http://www.micc.gouv.qc.ca/publications/fr/recherches-statistiques/FICHE_syn_an2010.pdf); Ministry of Internal Affairs (Finland) (2010) <http://www.migri.fi/download.asp?id=Maahanmuuton+vuosikatsaus+2010;2104;%7BCCFF28DC-2F25-4A0E-8423-DA7263544964%7D>
- 3 In Quebec, Muslim immigration started during the 1970s after the abolition of 'discriminative selection criteria' in the federal immigration policies.
- 4 See the Census of Canada 2001 (The results of the Census of Canada 2011 will be published on February, 2012) <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/francais/census01/products/highlight/Religion/Page.cfm?Lang=F&Geo=PR&View=1a&Code=24&T able=1&StartRec=1&Sort=2&B1=Counts&B2=1>
- 5 Pew Research Center 2011: [http://www.pewforum.org/uploadedFiles/Topics/Religious\\_Affiliation/Muslim/FutureGlobalMuslimPopulation-WebPDF-Feb10.pdf](http://www.pewforum.org/uploadedFiles/Topics/Religious_Affiliation/Muslim/FutureGlobalMuslimPopulation-WebPDF-Feb10.pdf)
- 6 The authors provide all the translations from Finnish to English.
- 7 The quotes are verbatim and have not been corrected.
- 8 The majority of immigrants who arrive in Quebec are selected immigrants (75.3 % in 2010) who fall within the economical category (69.5 % in 2010), while very few have a refugee status (8.7 % in 2010) (Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles 2010) [http://www.micc.gouv.qc.ca/publications/fr/recherches-statistiques/FICHE\\_syn\\_an2010.pdf](http://www.micc.gouv.qc.ca/publications/fr/recherches-statistiques/FICHE_syn_an2010.pdf).
- 9 Due to space limitation, the original discourses in Finnish are not reproduced in the excerpts.
- 10 Eman or Iman: faith or believe, particularly the idea of 'right belief' by virtue of being Muslim (Pratt 2005: 237).
- 11 Eftar or Iftar: evening meal that breaks the fasting during Ramadan.

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